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SUBJECT: JORDAN MAINTAINS HIGHEST ALERT STATUS FOR AVIAN INFLUENZA
FOLLOWING OUTBREAK IN ISRAEL

REF: A. Tel Aviv 32

[B](#). 07 Amman 5012
[C](#). 07 Riyadh 2412

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[1](#). (SBU) Following Israel's announcement of the discovery of the H5N1 virus at a poultry farm, the Government of Jordan (GOJ) has reviewed and maintained its highest level of alert status for the threat of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) (ref A). Israeli authorities reported the incident on January 3 to the International Organization of Animal Health (OIE) and simultaneously to Jordan's Ministry of Health (MOH), which in turn informed the Jordanian Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). Dr. Nasir Al-Hawamdeh, MOA Assistant Secretary General for Animal Welfare, informed EmbOffs that despite

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sound coordination between his ministry and its Israeli counterpart during the 2006 AI crises, there was no direct contact for this occurrence. Nevertheless, Hawamdeh confirmed that the MOA has taken immediate action, and added to its current alert status protective measures such as imposing a ban on all Israeli poultry products (which includes poultry transiting through Israel), and nullifying any previously granted poultry import licenses.

[2](#). (SBU) Veterinarian Laboratories Director Dr. Mahmoud Al-Hadid further confirmed to EmbOffs that his laboratories and staff are prepared for any challenge. He cited the availability and accessibility to protective gear, rapid testing materials, and disinfectants and sprayers, including equipped tractors. He reiterated that the trigger for Jordan's heightened preparedness to combat AI was actually in October 2007 when an outbreak occurred in Saudi Arabia (ref C). At that time, the GOJ put into action its contingency plan, which was only reinforced by the Israeli outbreak.

The plan includes a higher level of active surveillance for both commercial and backyard poultry farms, with a special focus on previously identified high risk areas (HRA). The plan also includes raising the level of active monitoring by the Royal Society for Conservation of Nature of migratory birds for any abnormal behavior.

¶3. (SBU) Dr. Lora Sawalha, Director of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Avian Influenza project at the MOA, confirmed the ministry will fully implement the GOJ plan. She noted that the MOA is waiting for diagnostic kits for mass inspection to test birds in high risk areas. One thousand kits are expected to arrive in Jordan in late January from FAO headquarters.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: The poultry industry is Jordan's biggest agribusiness, with a capital investment of more than USD 1.4 billion dollars. The industry provides the country with 65 percent of the white meat consumed and 99 percent of locally consumed eggs. As a result, Jordan takes seriously its responsibilities to prevent or contain HPAI.

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HALE